

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 26 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 30 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Ryan House

AND/OR COMMON Sumner Public Library

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 1228 Main Street

CITY, TOWN Sumner VICINITY OF 6th - Floyd V. Hicks

STATE Washington CODE 53 COUNTY Pierce CODE 053

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Town of Sumner

STREET & NUMBER 1104 Maple Street

CITY, TOWN Sumner VICINITY OF STATE Washington

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Sumner City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 1104 Maple Street

CITY, TOWN Sumner STATE Washington

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

DATE FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Ryan House is a modest frame farmhouse built of local cedar between 1875 and 1885. Although the house basically represents a simplified rural version of the classical revival style, it has been dressed up with the addition of Gothic Revival detail and of an expansive verandah exhibiting typical late 19th century millwork. While the sequence of additions to the house have not been conclusively documented, the present-day structure appears to consist of two distinct units: 1) a one and one-half story, two-room original core with a shed extension to the rear, and 2) two major c. 1885 additions to the south and west. The Ryan House is located near the center of the town of Sumner, and is partially surrounded by residential properties. It is situated on its own one-half block lot on Main Street, landscaped with lawn, plantings and trees.

The original portion of the house is sheathed with a variation of shiplap siding, and rests on a foundation of wooden posts and masonry piers. The gabled roof is now covered with composition shingles. An original chimney is centered on the ridge of the gable. The Main Street facade of this simple structure features a raised, covered front porch, the overhang of which is supported by decorative squared posts. The central entrance retains its original moulded, four-panelled door. Fenestration on the original house consists of six-over-six light, double-hung sash with simple plank surrounds. A rectangular bay window on the last elevation in all likelihood added at a later date, is comprised of five, two-over-two light, double-hung sash with simple surrounds.

A kitchen shed extension was appended to the rear or south side of the Ryan House probably at the time of its initial construction. The shiplap siding is continuous across these two structural units and six-over-six light fenestration is repeated in both areas. Dormer windows of generous proportions were concurrently attached to the main and shed roofs of the south elevation, increasing the admittance of light to both the ground floor and loft areas.

In 1885, to accommodate the growing Ryan family, a two and one-half story gabled addition was appended to the west elevation, perpendicular to the original house. This four room addition now forms the main body of the house, by virtue of usage, proportions, orientation and detail. In contrast to the earlier portions of the structure. This addition is sheathed in a simplified version of shiplap siding. The main roof is presently covered with composition shingles. Its projecting eaves are characterized by a moulded cornice, sloped soffit, and plain broad frieze, classical in feeling. Separating the attic gable from the second story is a narrow, projecting roof section which, in combination with the rake of the gable, creates the image of a pediment. Cedar shingles in a fish-scale pattern cover this narrow element.

The fenestration is the most distinctive aspect of the 1885 addition. Its asymmetrical configuration on the Main Street facade is in accord with fashionable stylistic trends of the period. All window surrounds are of the simple plank variety. However, the surround of the attic window on this facade features a triangular-shaped head which echoes the peak of the roof gable above. The one-over-one light, double-hung sash are enriched at second- and attic-floor levels with small bordering panes of stained glass, contributing to the Gothic flavor of the Ryan House's decorative detail.

The most compelling element of the 1885 addition is the broad verandah which lines the Main Street facade and the west and south elevations. The raised porch is protected from the weather by a projecting roof at second floor level. This overhang is supported by

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

stop-chamfered posts on plinth blocks. At their uppermost extremities, these posts are visually tied together by a course of small stop-chamfered spindles vertically aligned between continuous horizontal rails.

An extant photograph of the Ryan House, taken c. 1886 and showing the north and west elevations, illustrates the relatively few alterations that have been made in subsequent years. The cedar shakes which covered the main roof surfaces have been replaced or obscured with modern materials, as have the fish-scale shingles of the verandah overhang. The exterior color scheme, once a study in the contrast of light surfaces and dark accents, has obviously been changed to one of continuous white. The open verandah has recently been enclosed along the west facade and at the rear of the house, rendering the massing of the 1885 addition somewhat lopsided. Although the main entrance to the house is not visible in the 1885 photograph, the present-day door, inserted below a fixed transom light, appears to be a modern "Colonial" replacement.

A third major addition to the Ryan House apparently occurred simultaneously in 1885, or shortly thereafter. This gabled, one and one-half story, kitchen wing was attached to the rear (south) side of the above-described 1885 structure. Its fenestration is varied, including one-over-one and four-over-four light, double-hung sash in groupings of two's and three's. This wing also features a variation of shiplap siding on its exterior wall surfaces, and composition shingles on its roof.

Since 1926, the Ryan House has been used as a community library. The physical fabric of the interior of the 1885 addition remains largely intact. Interesting details include grooved, stop-chamfered door and transom surrounds; the original hall staircase; panelled, sliding double-parlor doors; and vertical tongue-in-groove wainscotting in the rear parlor or dining room. For the most part, the woodwork retains its original dark-stained finish.

Future plans for the Ryan House will involve a more thorough restoration of its architectural fabric, and adaptation of the residence-library to a community museum. In the restoration process, recent and unsympathetic alterations such as the enclosure of the verandah will be reversed.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
X___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	X___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1875-1885 BUILDER/ARCHITECT George Ryan, John Avery, & others.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sumner's sturdy Ryan house played an important role in the birth of this small Western Washington valley town. The Ryans were doers and dreamers and planners and workers who settled in a wilderness and helped create a pleasant rural hamlet.

George Ryan came west to Port Gable in 1872. There he heard of the rich valley of the Puyallup River. He went to investigate and decided to settle there. Ezra Meeker, prominent Washington pioneer who brought hops to the lush valley soil, invited Ryan to stay a few days. Meeker helped him find a suitable 40-acre farmsite, a place which had been part of the original donation land claim acquired by William M. Kincaid.

Before Ryan returned to Port Gamble he arranged to have lumber rough cut for a small house, and he found enough dry cedar plank on the scaffolding of a mill to use for doors and sash. The first part of the house completed in 1875 consisted of three rooms. The work was done by John Avery and a Mr. Hall, whom Ryan had known in the east before Hall came out to "build up Tacoma". Hall made all of the doors and sash "on the ground", Ryan recorded. "If you examine the doors and sash of the old house you will find he was a real mechanic as I claim," Ryan wrote.

The fireplace and chimney were made of bricks hauled from Steilacoom in 1875. Cedar for the building came from a ravine on the property. Ryan said there were 40 large cedar trees between his place and the nearest neighbor.

Ryan left the two men to work on the house while he returned to Port Gamble to work. He later sent a Mr. Gibbs to help - primarily to fell some 30 great cottonwoods on the property. One of the property's first fences was made of cottonwood logs, none under three and a quarter feet in diameter, laid end to end.

The house was built in a setting which differs greatly from its modern one. In that day the White and Puyallup Rivers did not discharge their floods into Commencement Bay. Rather all the valley and the Stuck River area became a vast delta. The formation on which the house was built differs from that of any other of the valleys entering Puget Sound. It is a sand spit, free of rock and marine matter. When Ryan arrived, a sand ridge was clearly defined from the Stuck River for a distance of more than two miles. Gigantic dead nude cottonwood trees stood stark and grey with shattered limbs. Many lay partially buried in the sand. It took two seasons to clear off the relics. For several years another part of the property was a swamp where water stood all season.

Lucy V. Wood came from Baraboo, Wisconsin, on the train to San Francisco in 1875 where she and George Ryan were married. They came by boat to Tacoma. After a short stay in the Blackwell Hotel on the docks, they went by rowboat up the Puyallup River to the Franklin post office and from there by horse-drawn wagon through heavy timber to the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Photocopies of letters written by Lucy Ryan and George Ryan, dating from 1875.
 Letter written by George Ryan in 1934.
 Article published by Mrs. George Campen in Tacoma News Tribune, November 11, 1956.
 Newspaper accounts of transfer of title from Ryan family to town of Sumner, published in Tacoma News Tribune, 1926.
 Interviews with family members.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	0
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5	5	7	7	6	0
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5	2	2	7	8	0	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

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D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Rita Happy, 11617 Gravelly Lake Drive, Tacoma, Washington 98499 (206) 588-2585
 ORGANIZATION Florence K. Lentz, DATE 4/16/76
Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission - Office of Archaeology & Historic Pres
 STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE
P. O. Box 1128
 CITY OR TOWN STATE
Olympia Washington

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Austin M. Shalish

TITLE

SHPO

DATE

5/18/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Active

[Signature]

DATE

6/30/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

[Signature]

DATE

6-25-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

small home which had just been completed. At first the Ryans lived in two upstairs rooms and Mr. and Mrs. John Avery lived below.

In 1876 Ryan built an addition on the back, which formed a large country kitchen. That year he also built "the first root house ever put up in this part of the country and also the first ice house."

From their pioneer home the couple managed the hired men who came to work in their new hop fields. They employed 50 Chinese pickers and 200 Indians, representatives of 11 tribes ranging from as far as 700 miles away. The Ryans learned pidgin English to talk with the Chinese, and Chinook jargon to communicate with the Indians.

The Ryans' friend, John Avery, was the first precinct justice of the peace. He held court in the Ryan House. One recorded case was that of a man charged with racing his mule too fast over the Stuck River bridge.

The small house also served as an early post office. The Franklin post office was closed. One day Lucy Ryan looked out the window in time to see the post office equipment dumped at her doorstep. She was informed she was to be the new postmistress. She did not seek the office; it sought her.

On August 31, 1883, the living room of the Ryan house was the site for the dedication of Sumner. The small group of witnesses really planned to dedicate a post office site; they had no idea they were founders of a town. Ryan had secured on a petition the signatures of every voter (except one) within a zone of about three miles - some 17 persons. He forwarded the petition to the Post Office Department asking that the office at Carson's Ferry be moved three miles east to or near the Stuck River Bridge. He asked that the name be changed from Franklin to Sumner.

Ryan previously had met with two other men at an old store building to find a name for the new site. Each man put a name into a hat, and a young boy was called in to draw a name. "Sumner" was the selection, a name chosen to honor U. S. senator Charles E. Sumner, a Bostonian and staunch abolitionist who served from 1851 to 1874.

In 1885 Ryan added four rooms to the original house. This included another two-story section. His letters relate that the fireplace in the upstairs bedroom was completed by 1886. The house was occupied by Lucy and George and their four sons and a daughter.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Ryan were important figures in the social and economic picture of the valley hamlet. George became the first mayor of Sumner when the town was incorporated in 1891. His oldest boy served as town lamplighter.

Ryan's most significant contribution to Sumner's economy was his operation of a large sawmill. Sumner Lumber Company, owned and operated by Ryan and two partners, was established in 1883 and incorporated in 1885. The partners purchased 5,000 acres of land on the hill above the sawmill site and processed mostly fir and cedar. They turned out all

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

kinds of dressed and rough lumber, hop boxes, fruit crates, shingles and water pipe. The sawmill had a capacity of 25,000 board feet daily, and the planing mill could turn out 15,000 board feet each day. Sawdust and slabs were burned in a huge fire that was kept flaming night and day.

One great project was the placing of 16 foot planks to make a road from the mill (at the foot of the hill) to the city - two miles away. The planks were a foot wide and four inches thick. One local wag called the road "Boulevard de Plank". The mill burned in the early 1890's.

Ryan's mill turned out log pipe, which was laid in 1882. Some was laid in the Sumner area and two miles of pipe went to the town of Slaughter (now Auburn). Pieces of the pipe are displayed in the Ryan house along with the valley's first high-wheel bicycle. The Ryan boy bought the bicycle with money he earned.

Lucy was a charter member of the local union of Women's Christian Temperance Union. She worked vigorously to keep saloons out of Sumner. Every deed Kincaid executed pertaining to his parcel of donation land claim property had clauses prohibiting the sale or manufacture of intoxicating liquors. The original Sumner was platted on this claim. The restrictions were not removed from every title to property until 1963.

Families came to Sumner to make their homes because of the absence of saloons. Whitworth College was located there in 1890 for the same reason. Local election campaigns over the years raged over the wet-dry issue. On voting day there were two ballot boxes, one labeled "wet" and one labeled "dry". Lucy Ryan and her companions in the WCTU did not have the vote. Instead they stood as close to the balloting area as possible, urging men to vote "dry".

Ryan previously had offered an alternative to the saloon in Sumner. He built in 1882 a roller skating rink. Some 100 skaters tried the floor on opening night. Crowds came from Tacoma and nearby communities as spectators. The floor was fir, laid from the center out so the tread was all on the grain. It was smoothed with plane and sandpapered by hand. Two local men saw the hall as a fortune in the making and offered to pay Ryan \$1,000 in \$25-a-month payments. They paid him \$100 on opening night, and that was the last he saw of any money. The others sold the equipment, and he admitted later that he was the "goat". The building was converted to an opera house and social center, scene of theater events and Whitworth College commencement exercises.

Lucy Ryan's ventures into horticulture are still evident around the old home. She planted a Wisconsin butternut tree by the house in 1875. The tree survived almost a hundred years before it had to be removed. In 1876 George brought in snowball, holly and sweet cherries from Olympia on his pony. All were mere twigs then. Some of those trees still survive. In 1878 Lucy wrote about picking blackberries and strawberries and about enjoying the white rose she had planted by her bedroom window.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Mrs. Ryan died October 29, 1925, while she was attending church services. On January 25, 1926, the heirs of the property deeded the pioneer homesite to the town for use as a library and park. At that time English ivy planted by Mrs. Ryan had crept inside the old part of the house and hung in festoons within the walls.

The library was moved into the newer part of the house, but circulation grew so rapidly that it was decided to restore the old portion. A local club organized the restoration. Tables, benches, lamps, old-fashioned wallpaper and draperies were kept in the period of the 1870's. Library patrons now glance outside through windows once used by Indians who curiously watched a pioneer woman bathe her tiny white babies in front of the fireplace.

The Ryan House remains today as a well-preserved example of rural architecture of the territorial period. Clearly the Ryan family played an active role of leadership in the early agricultural, industrial, and political development of Pierce County. As the virtually-intact, century-old home of a prominent pioneer family, the building constitutes a primary historical resource for the citizens of Sumner and the surrounding area.